More Cloak Than Dagger

STATINTL

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THE CRAFT OF INTELLIGENCE, by Allen Dulles. *Harper & Row. $4.95.*

It takes an effort these days to make oneself believe that even in a police state like Soviet Russia there exists a high-level government department with no function except to plan and carry out the assassination of the régime's enemies who have gone abroad. I had supposed that bureaucratized murder must have disappeared with the death of Stalin and the liquidation of Beria. Thanks to Mr. Dulles's book, I now know that the "Executive Action" section of the KGB, the Soviet secret service, continues to carry out murders in the name of ideology.

". . . In the subsequent era of so-called 'socialist legality' which was proclaimed by Khrushchev in 1956," Mr. Dulles reveals, "a later generation of exiled leaders was decimated. The only difference between the earlier and later crops of political murders lay in the subtlety and efficacy of the murder weapons. The mysterious deaths in Munich, in 1957 and 1959, of Lev Rebet and Stephen Bandera, leaders of the Ukrainian émigrés, were managed with a cyanide spray that killed almost instantaneously."

As Mr. Dulles points out, the importance the Soviet government continues to attach to the mission of the Executive Action section is demonstrated by the recent appointment of General Korovin (real name Nikolay B. Rodin) to head it. Korovin was the top-level KGB agent who as counselor of the Soviet embassy in London from 1953 to early 1961 was in charge of the subsequently notorious George Blake and William Vassall. It makes you wonder.

The Craft of Intelligence was not intended as a controversial book. The polemical tone is absent, the good faith transparent. There is, naturally, some earnest salesmanship in the cause of foreign intelligence as an essential component of the national security and on behalf of the

CIA itself as an indispensable arm of government. There is not the slightest trace of any special pleading on behalf of Mr. Dulles's own role as director of the agency, no oblique jab at the administration that terminated it. Those who believe—I suspect with some justification—that his retirement in 1961 was a kind of ritual sacrifice for errors of judgment or character committed by persons outside his service in the Bay of Pigs fiasco will find nothing either to substantiate or to invalidate the suspicion. In or out of office, Allen Dulles is incorrigibly discreet, unfailingly gentlemanly. His book, a lucid, authoritatively documented primer on the art and profession of intelligence, apparently addressed to the general public, suffers occasionally from these virtues.

Yet thanks to the fantastic acceleration of history in our day, Mr. Dulles has produced at least a small bombshell in spite of himself. Retrospective shivers run down one's spine in reading his mild comments on the intelligence background of the Cuba crisis last year. Despite the "serious premonitions" of Dulles's successor at CIA, John A. McCone, the Washington intelligence community long refused to believe agent reports that Khrushchev was installing offensive missile bases in Cuba: he could not afford to run such a risk, the experts affirmed. Only after much argument, and barely in the nick of time, did the reconnaissance planes discover that Khrushchev didn't know the rules. "Cuba," Mr. Dulles observes, "is yet another instance to warn us that one must be prepared for Khrushchev to do the unexpected, the unusual, the shocking. . . ." The warning was merely prudent when Mr. Dulles was writing his book; today, some six or eight months later, with any heretical "premonitions" in the intelligence community far more effectively stifled than before and with belief in Khrushchev's irrevocable commitment to a durable détente reinforced, it sounds a great deal more pointed.

Like most professional intelligence officers in Western Europe, Mr. Dulles is convinced that the Soviets in adopting more subtle techniques of subversion have not abandoned their goal of destroying our society and establishing world dominion. His interesting and important thoughts on this subject no doubt had only a cautionary intent when he wrote them down; in the light of recent diplomatic developments they constitute an implicit but nonetheless disturbing critique of the Kennedy administration's Soviet policy. There are several hints in the book that Mr. Dulles's views on the critical and controversial issue of Khrushchev's long-range intentions toward the West are based on definite information of some kind. It is a great pity that he has not felt able to reveal the general nature of this information, if it exists.

Even if Mr. Dulles's opinion is merely the fruit of his years of experience in the intelligence craft and the "feel" for the enemy's intentions they have given him, it would be worth listening to. But if he wants it to illumine the national debate on the issue instead of merely adding controversial heat, he will have to bolster it with more sophisticated analysis than this book attempts to offer. No doubt he is preparing at some suitable moment to do so.